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INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE  
RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE  
RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000188

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG, AF/C  
NSC FOR HUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/10/2019  
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: MINNAWI NOT GOING TO DOHA, BUT EAGER TO FIGHT JEM  
IN DARFUR

REF: A. KHARTOUM 173  
[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 169

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)  
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[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Meeting with CDA Fernandez in Khartoum on February 9, Minni Minnawi and Ali Traio reiterated that SLM/MM will not intend to send representatives to Doha as part of a GOS delegation to participate in Darfur peace talks with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). Minnawi criticized all parties to the talks, and said that his movement is poised to battle the forces of his rival Khalil Ibrahim, as JEM is trapped in SLA/MM territory near Jebel Marra, according to Minnawi. Minnawi sees JEM as highly motivated to enter into a peace deal with the GOS, first to save their skin in Darfur, and second to save the lives of JEM captives in Khartoum, among them Khalil Ibrahim's half-brother. Minnawi views the meeting between the GOS and JEM as a reconciliation among the hardline islamists. Minnawi and his movement look forward to visiting the U.S. soon to meet with senior policy makers in the new Administration. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Minnawi insisted that he will not travel to Doha. He recounted a meeting earlier in the day with Vice President Taha and Presidential Assistant Nafie plus a hectoring phone call from NISS chief Salah Ghosh, in which Minnawi also refused their entreaties to participate in the Qatari initiative. "They want to use me, to blindly take me to Qatar," he said. Miffed that he received his invitation to Doha indirectly through the GOS, Minnawi added, "We are not happy with the mediator, we are not happy with the government, we are not happy with the Qataris, we are not happy with Khalil Ibrahim, and that is why we don't go." Reciting a litany of unfilled GOS promises - including the now-dormant Taha-Minnawi El Fasher agreement from September 2008 - Minnawi criticized Bassole as well for not recognizing the DPA's existence. CDA counseled Minnawi that his presence in any negotiations would support the peace process in Darfur, it is the USG's preference that Minni participate in all Darfur-related issues but understood Minni's caution as the GOS has not yet clarified its position vis-a-vis Minnawi's movement. SLM/MM assistant Ali Traio said the movement will not travel to Qatar because JEM's participation at the meetings will taint the legitimacy of the proceedings. "Abdulwahid said, 'If Minni joins, this is a Zaghawa deal.' We won't join them in Doha," Traio said.

[1](#)3. (C) Following the January clashes between JEM and SLA/MM in South Darfur, Minnawi appeared itching for a rematch with JEM as Khalil Ibrahim's rebel movement attempts to return to its territory inside Chad. "JEM is in a very dangerous

situation. We have them inside a small hole. All of our people are surrounding them," he told CDA. Asked if he had enough forces to defeat the followers of Khalil Ibrahim, Minnawi affirmed that his movement was adequately prepared, boasting, "If we were ready before, they would never have fought with Minni Minnawi. Khalil Ibrahim is a stupid man, and crazy." Minnawi sees JEM as eager to initiate negotiations with the GOS for two reasons. At the moment, by signing an immediate ceasefire with the GOS, JEM can turn a military debacle into a political victory and will ensure safe passage for its rebels to return to Chad. Additionally, by aiming for an eventual peace deal with the GOS at Doha, Khalil Ibrahim will save the life of his half brother, Ibrahim Osher, a JEM commander who was captured by the GOS during JEM's May 10 assault on Omdurman. "The regime can say, 'If you do not sign, we will execute your brother,'" Traio said. Recounting what appeared to be a well-circulated rumor in Khartoum, Traio said that GOS President Omar Al-Bashir had already signed Khalil's brother's death sentence, and upon showing it to him, his captors gave him a telephone. The two rebels, sons of the same mother but sired by different brothers from the same Kobe Zaghawa family, reportedly spent three hours on the telephone, as Osher begged his brother to enter a peace deal to save his life.

4\* (C) Commenting on the International Criminal Court's pending issuance of an arrest warrant against Bashir, Minnawi was doubtful that the ICC could improve the situation in Darfur, calling it a "legal issue" dealing with past events in Darfur, and not reflective of current facts on the ground. Even as the GOS enters into peace talks, it has less money to breed instability in Darfur, though Minnawi and Traio both

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agreed that the janjaweed militias will continue to threaten Darfuris. "The janjaweed will pay for themselves," Traio said, adding that SLM/MM sees JEM and Hassan Al-Turabi's People Congress Party as a destabilizing force in Khartoum, but making no positive changes in Darfur. Minnawi and Traio view the Doha meetings between the GOS and JEM as a reconciliation among the hardline islamists. Minnawi was optimistic that the U.S. would name a new special envoy to Sudan soon, and told CDA that he and senior representatives from SLM/MM are eager to visit the U.S. as soon as possible to meet with senior policy makers in the new Administration.

15. (C) Comment: While Khalil Ibrahim may hope to turn his military defeat in South Darfur into a political victory in Doha, Minnawi is eager to play the spoiler of the Doha talks, having just been attacked by JEM in South Darfur with GOS acquiescence. If, as NCP sources have indicated to CDA, the GOS is prepared to offer JEM considerably more than expected at the peace talks, Minnawi may be motivated to act immediately against JEM to demonstrate that he still has some fighting capacity and is not just another sidelined Sudanese politician. We will continue to urge restraint but it is clear that Minnawi is looking for either revenge or compensation. The GOS and Chief Mediator Bassole need to convince Minnawi to participate the peace process by offering him some sort of independent status at the talks and dealing with him directly. If they do not take such an approach, but rather continue to sideline Minnawi, we may well see a resurgence of SLM with an overall up-tick in fighting in Darfur. Although JEM is currently the strongest rebel force in Darfur thanks to direct support from Chad, we should not forget that at the time of the signing of the DPA in Abuja in 2006, Minnawi led by far the strongest faction of SLM in Darfur. As far as Minni's travel to the US, we are in principle supportive, but it faces similar drawbacks that the JEM visit to Washington in January had: this is another feared (although Minnawi is actually less dangerous than Khalil) Zaghawa military movement, not representative of the overwhelming majority of the people of Darfur. End comment. FERNANDEZ